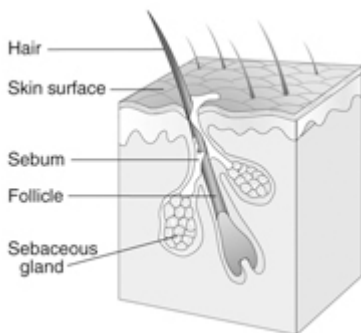




What is it?

Points To Remember About Alopecia Areata

- Alopecia areata causes hair to fall out. Most people only lose hair in small, round patches. Some people may lose more or all their hair.
- Your hair may grow back, even if you lose all of it. But it may fall out again.
- Alopecia areata does not make you feel pain and does not make you sick. You can't give it to others.
- Genes and environment work together to determine whether you get alopecia areata.
- There is no cure. Medicines approved for other diseases can help hair grow back. Talk to your doctor about which medicines are best for you.
- Protect bare skin from sun, dirt, and germs. Use cosmetics to cover small amounts of hair loss. Hats, wigs, and scarves can cover more hair loss.



Normal hair follicle and surrounding structures.

Alopecia areata is a disease that attacks your hair follicles (the part of your skin that makes hair). In most cases, hair falls out in small, round patches about the size of a quarter. This causes only a few bare patches. Some people may lose more hair. In only a few people, the disease causes total loss of hair on the head or loss of all body hair.

Your hair may grow back, even if you lose all of it. But it may fall out again. No one can tell you when it might fall out or grow back. You may lose more hair, or your hair loss may stop. The hardest part of the disease is not having these answers.

Who gets it?

Anyone can have alopecia areata. It often begins in childhood. You have a slightly higher risk of having alopecia areata if a close family member has it. Your risk is even greater if your family member lost his or her first patch of hair before age 30.

What are the symptoms?

Alopecia areata does not make you feel pain and does not make you sick. In most cases, hair falls out in small, round patches about the size of a quarter. This causes only a few bare patches. Some people may lose more hair. In only a few people, the disease causes total loss of hair on the head or loss of all body hair.

What causes it?

Doctors don't know what causes alopecia areata. This is a type of disease where your immune system attacks some part of your own body by mistake, even though it's supposed to fight germs and viruses. In alopecia areata, the immune system attacks the hair follicles (the part of the skin that makes hair).

No one knows why your body starts attacking its hair follicles. Scientists think that your genes may play a role. This does not mean that your child will inherit the disease. In fact, this probably won't happen.

Even if you have the genes that increase the chances you'll get the disease, there has to be some type of trigger that starts the disease process. The trigger may be a virus or something else in your environment.

How is it treated?

There is no cure for alopecia areata. There are no drugs approved to treat it. There are medicines that have been approved for other diseases to help hair grow back. Talk to your doctor about which medicines are best for you.

However, none of these medicines prevent new patches of hair loss or cure the disease.

Living With It

Alopecia areata does not make you feel pain and does not make you sick. You can't give it to others. People who have the disease are still considered healthy, and you will still live a full, long life. Alopecia areata should not affect activities such as going to school, working, marrying, raising a family, playing sports, and exercising.

However, living with hair loss can be hard. There are many things you can do to cope with the effects of this disease.

Get support.

- Learn as much as you can about the disease.
- Talk with others who are dealing with it.
- Realize your value is in who you are, not for how much hair you have or don't have.
- Talk with a counselor, if necessary, to help build your image.

Protect bare skin and stay comfortable.

- Use sunscreens for any bare areas.
- Wear eyeglasses (or sunglasses) to protect your eyes from sun and dust, when eyebrows or eyelashes are missing.
- Wear wigs, hats, or scarves to protect your scalp from the sun and keep the head warm.
- Use antibiotic ointment inside your nose to help keep germs out if nostril hair is missing.

Reduce the disease's effects on your looks.

- Try wearing a wig, hairpiece, scarf, or cap.
- Use a hair-colored powder, cream, or crayon applied to the scalp for small patches of hair loss to make the hair loss less obvious.
- Use an eyebrow pencil if you are missing eyebrows.

For More Info

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases

Website: <https://www.niaid.nih.gov>

American Academy of Dermatology

Website: <https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/hair-and-scalp-problems/alopecia-areata>

Alopecia Areata Registry

Website: <https://www.mdanderson.org/research/departments-labs-institutes/programs-centers/alopecia-areata-registry.html>

National Alopecia Areata Foundation (NAAF)

Website: <https://www.naaf.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov.

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)

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Related Information

[Cicatricial Alopecia \(Overview\)](#)

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[Alopecia Areata, Easy-to-Read Fast Facts](#)
[Alopecia Areata, Questions and Answers about Autoimmune Diseases, Understanding](#)